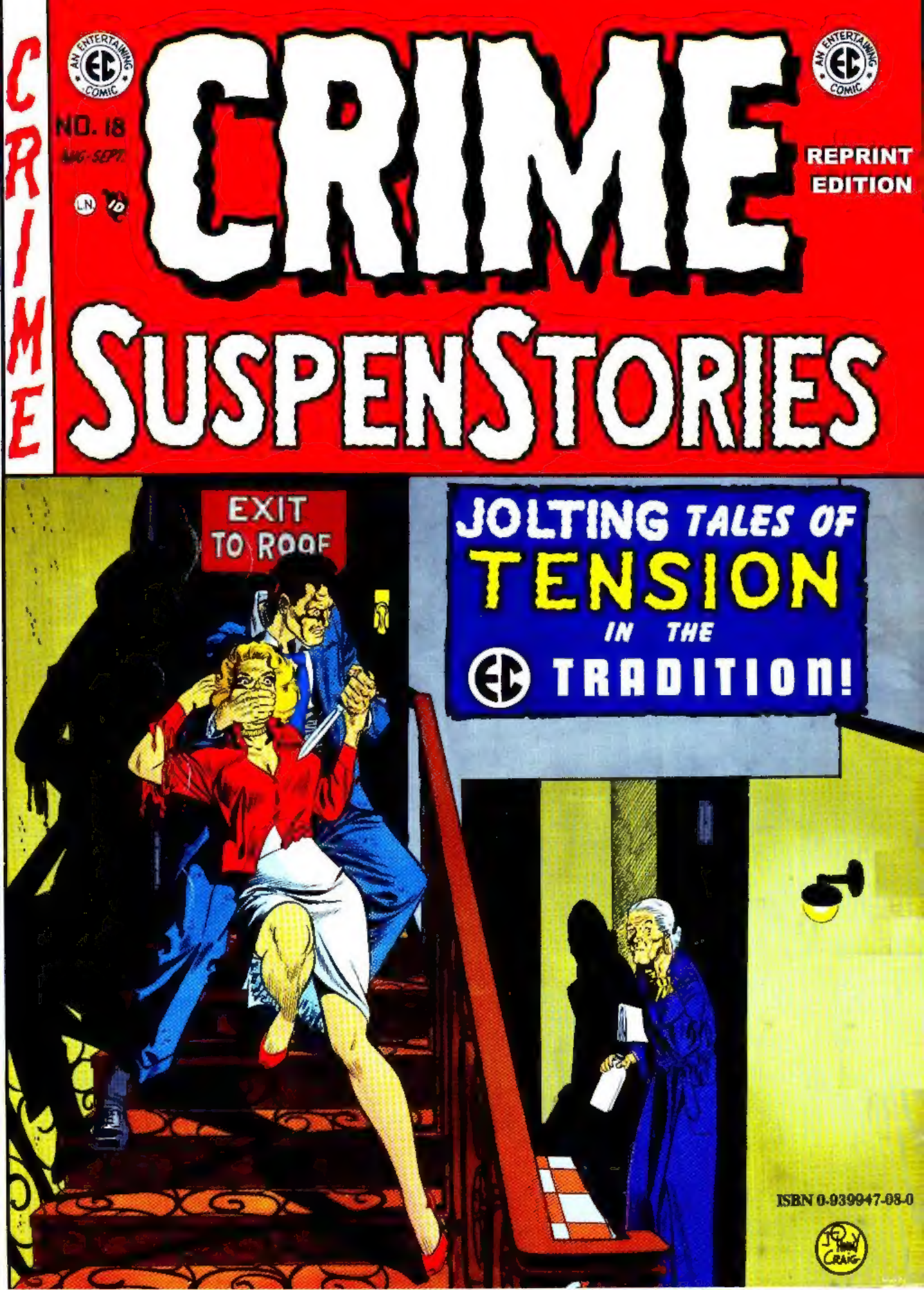
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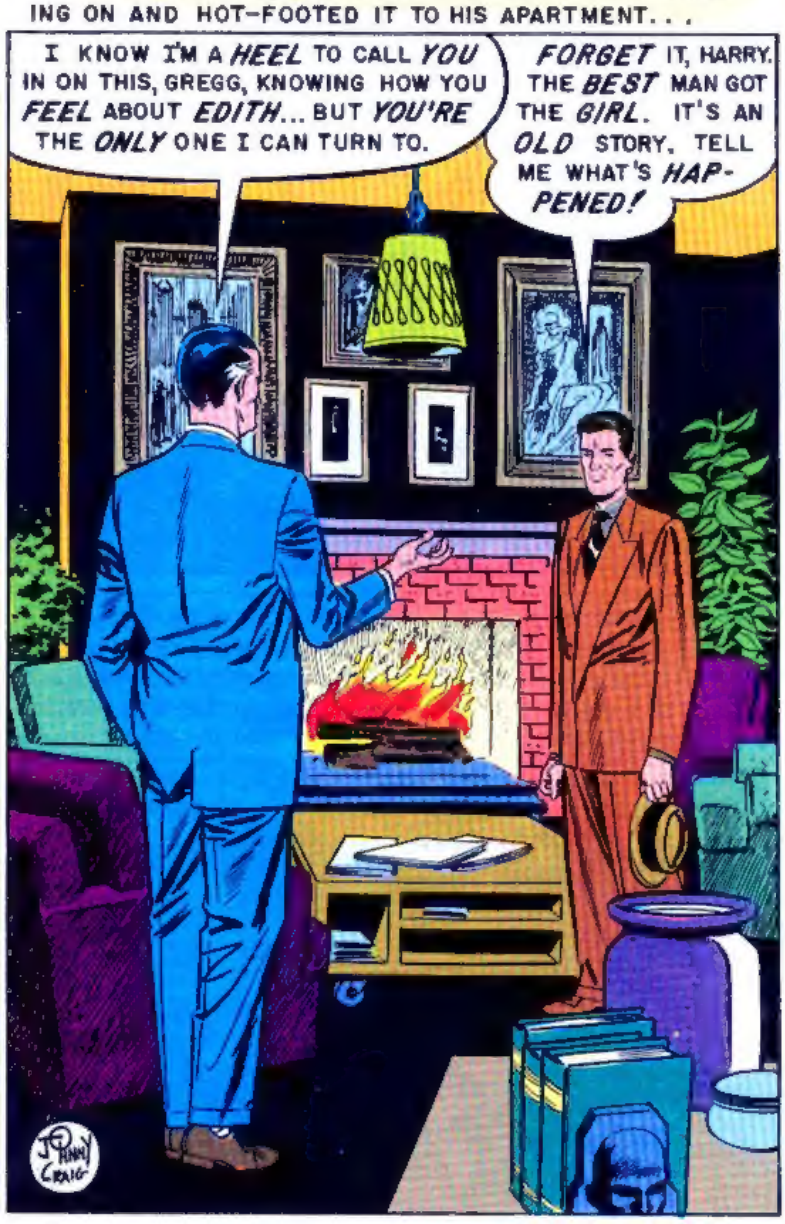
JOHN CRAIG

FALL GUY for MURDER

THE NAME IS GREGG SAUNDERS. I'VE GOT A LITTLE CARD IN MY POCKET ISSUED BY THE POLICE DEPARTMENT, THIS CITY, WHICH SAYS I'M A *PRIVATE DETECTIVE*. THERE'S A PISTOL PERMIT NESTLED RIGHT BEHIND IT FOR THE BENEFIT OF ANY NOSEY COP WHO MAY GET CURIOUS ABOUT THE BULGE UNDER THE LEFT SIDE OF MY SUIT-COAT WHERE I KEEP MY .38. I WAS ALWAYS PRETTY PROUD OF MY CAPABILITIES AS A CLEAR-HEADED, STRAIGHT-THINKING INVESTIGATOR. NOBODY'D EVER MADE A FOOL OF ME. THEY USUALLY ENDED UP WITH A BULLET-HOLE BETWEEN THEIR EYES BEFORE THEY GOT THAT FAR! MY REPUTATION AS A PRIVATE-EYE WHO PRODUCED RESULTS KEPT MY OFFICE PHONE RINGING WITH AN ENDLESS STREAM OF ANXIOUS WOULD-BE CLIENTS WITH PROBLEMS. BUT WHEN HARRY WILSON CALLED ME, I DROPPED EVERYTHING I WAS WORKING ON AND HOT-FOOTED IT TO HIS APARTMENT...


I KNOW I'M A *HEEL* TO CALL *YOU* IN ON THIS, GREGG, KNOWING HOW YOU *FEEL* ABOUT *EDITH*... BUT *YOU'RE* THE *ONLY* ONE I CAN TURN TO.
FORGET IT, HARRY. THE *BEST* MAN GOT THE *GIRL*. IT'S AN *OLD* STORY. TELL ME WHAT'S *HAPPENED!*
JOHNNY CRAIG

TWO YEARS BEFORE, HARRY WILSON HAD MARRIED THE GIRL I'D BEEN ENGAGED TO... EDITH COLBY. I'D BEEN CRAZY ABOUT EDITH, BUT IT WAS JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS... THE USUAL ROUTINE. EDITH FELL FOR HIM, HANDED ME BACK THE RING, AND WE PARTED THE BEST OF FRIENDS...

EDITH HAS *LEFT* ME, GREGG. SHE'S *PACKED UP* AND *VANISHED*... NO *NOTE*... NO *WORD*... *NOTHING!*
WHAT?! I'M... SORRY TO *HEAR* THAT, HARRY. I THOUGHT YOU TWO WERE GETTING ON SO *WELL.*

I'D NEVER LIKED HARRY WILSON. I'D ONLY REMAINED CORDIAL TO HIM IN ORDER TO SEE EDITH NOW AND THEN. I GUESS I'D CARRIED A TORCH FOR HER OVER THOSE TWO YEARS. THIS BUST-UP CAME AS A COMPLETE SURPRISE TO ME...

THAT'S JUST *IT*, GREGG. WE *WERE* GETTING ON... *VERY WELL!* I CAN'T *UNDERSTAND* IT. THREE NIGHTS AGO I CAME HOME FROM THE OFFICE AND FOUND *ALL OF HER THINGS GONE*. C'MON... I'LL *SHOW* YOU!
LEAD THE WAY...
1

HARRY LED ME INTO A NICELY FURNISHED BEDROOM. HE SLID BACK A LARGE MIRRORED WARDROBE-DOOR AND POINTED TO THE BARE RACK...

ALL HER *CLOTHES*... HER *SUITCASES*... *SHOES*... *HATS*... *EVERYTHING*...

IT CERTAINLY LOOKS LIKE SHE *MEANT BUSINESS*...

HE FLUNG OPEN DRESSER-DRAWERS THAT YAWNED EMPTY...

LINGERIE... *ALL*... *GONE!*

I SEE...

GUYS LIKE HARRY WILSON *KILL* ME. THEY SIT IN THEIR OFFICES AND PULL DOWN THEIR TWENTY GRAND A YEAR, AND THEY THINK THEY'RE *SMARTER* THAN THE *WHOLE WORLD*. I SAT DOWN ON THE BED...

ALL RIGHT, HARRY. SHE'S *LEFT* YOU. WHY CALL *ME* IN?

BECAUSE I WANT YOU TO *FIND* HER FOR ME, GREGG.

I FLIPPED A BUTT UP FROM MY PACK AND PICKED IT OUT WITH MY LIPS. I SNAPPED OPEN MY LIGHTER AND STARED AT THE DANCING FLAME.

WHY NOT CALL IN THE *COPS*, HARRY? THEY HAVE A DEPARTMENT THAT *HANDLES* THIS SORT OF THING... *MISSING PERSONS*...

I *CAN'T*, GREGG. YOU *KNOW* THAT! I CAN'T STAND THE *PUBLICITY*. IT WOULD *RUIN* ME IN *MY* PROFESSION...

I NODDED AND STOOD UP. I PEERED INTO THE EMPTY BUREAU DRAWERS, NOSED AROUND THE BARE CLOSET. THEN I TURNED TO HARRY...

THIS ISN'T *MY* SORT OF *CASE*, HARRY. BUT... SINCE IT'S FOR *YOU* AND... AND *EDITH*, I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN *DO*.

GOOD! I'LL MAKE YOU OUT A *CHECK* AS A *RETAINER*. HOW MUCH...?

HARRY STARTED TO REACH INTO HIS POCKET FOR HIS PEN AND CHECK BOOK. I PUT OUT MY HAND...

NO, THANKS, HARRY! THIS IS ON *ME*... FOR *OLD TIME'S SAKE*...

I *INSIST* ON PAYING YOU, GREGG. IT'S THE *LEAST* I CAN DO...

I HAD TO *FORCE* MYSELF TO KEEP FROM SWINGING OUT AND *SLAMMING HIS GRINNING TEETH BACK DOWN HIS THROAT*. LORD, WHAT KIND OF A *SAP* DID HE *TAKE* ME FOR? DID HE THINK HE WAS PUTTING SOMETHING *OVER* ON ME? I SHOOK MY HEAD...

I SAID, '*NO FEE*', HARRY. LET'S JUST CALL THIS A... LABOR OF *LOVE*!

I... I UNDERSTAND, GREGG!

I TOOK ONE LAST LOOK AROUND THE STRIPPED BEDROOM AND WALKED OUT INTO THE HALL. I TOOK MY HAT FROM THE CHAIR...

I'LL KEEP IN *TOUCH* WITH YOU, HARRY!

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO *THANK* YOU FOR THIS, GREGG...

I WENT DOWN IN THE ELEVATOR CURSING. I'D *GET* HIM FOR IT. I'D GET HIM IF IT WAS THE *LAST THING I DID*..

YOU CAN'T KID *ME*, YOU DIRTY @#!!?x! YOU *MURDERED* EDITH, AND I'M GOING TO *PROVE* IT!

EDITH HAD ALWAYS SAID HARRY WAS CLEVER. ONE *HAD* TO BE CLEVER TO BE A SUCCESSFUL STOCKBROKER. ONE HAD TO HAVE *IMAGINATION*, TOO. WELL, IT WAS THE SAME IN MY RACKET. AND HARRY *HADN'T* BEEN SO CLEVER *AFTER ALL*...

WOMEN WHO LEAVE THEIR *HUSBANDS* DON'T *PACK UP* EVERY BLASTED THING THEY *OWN*...

YES. HARRY HADN'T USED HIS IMAGINATION...

THERE'S BOUND TO BE *OLD HOUSE DRESSES, OUT-OF-STYLE SKIRTS, WORN SHOES, STOCKINGS* WITH *RUNS*... *LOTS* OF THINGS THAT A WOMAN WOULD *LEAVE BEHIND!*

YES, HARRY HAD MADE A MISTAKE. HE'D *CLEANED OUT* EDITH'S CLOSETS AND DRAWERS *COMPLETELY*... *STRIPPED THEM* OF *EVERYTHING*. IT WAS *UNNATURAL*. IT *SMELLED TO HIGH HEAVEN*...

I'LL SEE YOU BURN FOR THIS, HARRY WILSON...

IT WAS GOING TO BE TOUGH PROVING MY THEORY. *VERY* TOUGH. I COULDN'T LET HARRY KNOW I WAS WISE TO HIM, I'D HAVE TO KEEP HIM THINKING I'D FALLEN FOR HIS PHONY STORY. THE ELEVATOR DOORS PARTED, AND I CROSSED THE LOBBY TO THE STREET AND HAILED A CAB..

YES, SIR. WHERE TO?

CITY MORGUE...

ALL THE WAY DOWNTOWN I KEPT TRYING TO FIGURE HARRY'S ANGLE. WHERE DID *I* FIT IN? WHY DID HE PULL *ME* INTO HIS SCHEME? WAS I TO BE HIS *DUPE*... HIS *ALIBI?* THE TAXI STOPPED AND I GOT OUT, PAID OFF THE DRIVER WITH A FIN, WAVED OFF THE CHANGE, AND WENT INTO THE MORGUE..

WELL... IF IT ISN'T THE *SHAMUS HIMSELF*. WHAT'S *NEW*, SAUNDERS?

I'M WORKING ON A *CASE*, PHIL. ANY *UNIDENTIFIED BODIES* COME IN THE LAST TWO DAYS?

PHIL KRAMER WAS AN OLD FRIEND. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD...

NOT A ONE GREGG! WORKING ON A MURDER CASE?

I DON'T *KNOW* FOR *SURE*, PHIL! I *THINK* SO. GIVE ME A RING IF A *FEMALE BODY* TURNS UP, WILL YOU... ABOUT *TWENTY-EIGHT, BLONDE, BLUE EYES...*

PHIL NODDED. I LEFT AND WENT BACK UPTOWN. I MADE A CHECK OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD STORES AROUND THE WILSON APARTMENT...

MRS. WILSON? WHY, *NO!* I HAVEN'T *SEEN* HER FOR A *FEW DAYS.* ANYTHING *WRONG?*

NO. JUST... CHECKING...

MY LAST STOP WAS A DRUG STORE. I CORNERED THE PHARMACIST AND FLASHED HIM MY *P. I.* CARD...

TELL ME WHAT YOU CAN ABOUT *HARRY WILSON.* HAS HE PURCHASED ANY *POISONS* LATELY? ANY *LETHAL DRUGS...?*

MR. WILSON? WHY, *NO!* FUNNY THING YOU SHOULD *ASK,* THOUGH...

THE DRUG-STORE PROPRIETOR POINTED TO A LINE OF STACKED SHELVES CRAMMED WITH GAUDY-JACKETED BOOKS... A *LENDING LIBRARY...*

MR. WILSON'S BECOME QUITE A *MYSTERY FAN* IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS. *MURDER MYSTERIES,* HE STARTED TAKING OUT *TWO* AND *THREE* AT A *TIME...*

REALLY? VERY *INTERESTING!*

BOOKS
FICTION
HISTORICAL
Lending Library

NEVER *TOUCHED* 'EM TILL ABOUT *FOUR MONTHS AGO.* THEN HE STARTED READING 'EM LIKE *CRAZY.* ALWAYS THE *SAME KIND, TOO,* MURDER MYSTERIES ABOUT *MEN* WHO *KILLED THEIR WIVES.* I *CHECKED.* YOU SEE, I'M AN *AMATEUR PSYCHIATRIST,* AND YOU CAN TELL SO *MUCH* ABOUT PEOPLE BY WHAT THEY *READ.* NOW YOU TAKE *MRS. FOLEY...*

DO YOU HAVE A *RECORD* OF THE BOOKS MR. WILSON *BORROWED?*

BOOKS
FICTION
HISTORICAL

THE PHARMACIST BROUGHT OUT A SMALL INDEX-CARD BOX AND SHUFFLED THROUGH THEM...

YES, HERE WE ARE. HERE'S THE RECORD RIGHT HERE. STARTS WITH 'THE BLOOD-RED-HEADED BLONDE'...

THANKS. MIND IF I LOOK IT OVER?

I STARTED COPYING DOWN THE TITLES OF ALL THE BOOKS HARRY'D BORROWED. IT WAS *INCREDIBLE.* HE'D TAKEN OUT *TWO* AND *THREE,* AND BROUGHT THEM BACK THE *NEXT* DAY AND TAKEN OUT *MORE.* HE WAS EITHER A *FAST READER,* OR... *OR...*

OF COURSE! HE WAS *LOOKING* FOR SOMETHING. SOMETHING *SPECIFIC!* SOMETHING THAT WOULD GIVE HIM AN *IDEA* ON *HOW TO GO ABOUT KILLING EDITH...*

OH, I ALMOST *FORGOT!* SEE THAT *LAST* ENTRY? HE *LOST THAT BOOK!*

SO HARRY WILSON WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE AN IMAGINATION. SO HARRY WILSON WAS SUPPOSED TO BE CLEVER. WELL, HE WASN'T CLEVER ENOUGH TO PLAN A MURDER. HE HAD TO GET IT OUT OF A BOOK...
YOU SAY HE LOST THIS ONE?
YEP! I MADE HIM PAY FOR IT! $2.50, LESS DEPRECIATION. COME TO THINK OF IT, HE NEVER BORROWED ANOTHER ONE AFTER THAT. GUESS HE WAS SORE!
'FALL GUY FOR MURDER!' THAT WAS IT! THAT WAS THE ANSWER! ALL I HAD TO DO WAS GET HOLD OF A COPY OF THE BOOK HARRY'D 'LOST' AND READ IT...
DO YOU HAVE THIS BOOK IN AT THE PRESENT TIME? THIS 'FALL GUY FOR MURDER'?
COULDN'T REPLACE IT. IT'S OUT OF PRINT!
I TOOK DOWN THE AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER OF THE BOOK, THANKED THE DRUG STORE GUY, AND CAUGHT A TAXI UPTOWN TO THE LIBRARY...
SORRY! 'FALL GUY FOR MURDER' WAS NEVER INCLUDED IN OUR MYSTERY COLLECTION. IF WE WERE TO HAVE EVERY MYSTERY BOOK EVER WRITTEN, WE'D...
OKAY! THANKS, ANYWAY...
I TRIED TWO BOOK STORES AND A USED-BOOK SHOP WITH NO LUCK. THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO GET TO READ THAT BOOK. I MADE A PHONE CALL...
HELLO, HARRY? THIS IS GREGG. MEET ME AT MY OFFICE IN TWENTY MINUTES, WILL YOU? IF I'M NOT THERE, WAIT! I HAVE SOME NEWS ABOUT EDITH...
I TOOK A CAB BACK UPTOWN AND WAITED ACROSS THE STREET TILL HARRY CAME OUT OF THE APARTMENT BUILDING...
AS SOON AS HE'D TURNED THE CORNER, I CROSSED OVER, TOOK THE ELEVATOR UP, AND LET MYSELF IN WITH ONE OF MY TRUSTY MASTER-KEYS...
I MADE STRAIGHT FOR THE LIVING-ROOM WALL-BOOK-CASE. IT WAS SITTING THERE BIG AS LIFE... 'FALL GUY FOR MURDER'. I REACHED UP AND TOOK IT DOWN. THE BOOK-JACKET WAS THE USUAL MYSTERY-TYPE... A DAME LYING SPRAWLED ON THE FLOOR... A SMOKING GUN HELD IN A GRIMY FIST STICKING OUT OF ONE CORNER...
FALL GUY for MURDER
5

I SAT DOWN IN A CHAIR AND OPENED THE BOOK. THE DRUG STORE LENDING LIBRARY'S STAMP WAS ON THE INSIDE FRONT COVER. AND... AND...

THERE'RE *WHOLE PASSAGES MARKED OFF IN PENCIL.* THIS IS THE *ANSWER!* RIGHT *HERE!* HOW HE *MURDERED* HER! WHAT HE DID WITH THE *BODY...*

HARRY'D BEEN *REALLY* DUMB. *ALL* MYSTERY-BOOKS HAVE A *SOLUTION.* DIDN'T HE *KNOW* THAT? ALL I HAD TO DO WAS *READ* IT, AND HE'D BE *TRAPPED...*

WELL, *I'LL BE...!* THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN IN THE *FIRST PERSON...* BY A *PRIVATE-EYE...*

ALL GUY for MURDER

IT WAS AN IRONIC COINCIDENCE. I STARTED SCANNING. THE MORE I READ, THE MORE *IRONIC* THE COINCIDENCE *BECAME...*

WHY, IT'S ALMOST THE *EXACT SAME SITUATION. THIS PRIVATE-EYE* IS CALLED IN BY THE *HUSBAND* OF *HIS* EX-SWEETHEART. IT SEEMS *SHE'S* DISAPPEARED...

IN THE BOOK, THE HUSBAND MADE THE *SAME MISTAKE.* HE *CLEANED OUT EVERYTHING* FROM THE *WIFE'S CLOSET* AND *DRAWERS.* THE PRIVATE-EYE *NOTICED* THIS...AS *I* HAD DONE...

BUT THEN... THEN HARRY *KNEW* IT WAS A *STUPID BLUNDER.* WHY DID *HE DO IT?* I READ ON. THE PRIVATE EYE SUSPECTED MURDER. AT A CORNER DRUGSTORE, HE LEARNED THAT THE HUSBAND HAD STARTED READING MYSTERY BOOKS...

DO YOU HAVE A *RECORD* OF THE BOOKS HE *BORROWED?*

WHY, YES! HERE WE ARE... ON THIS CARD.

VISIT OUR LENDING LIBRARY

SALE!

IN THE BOOK, THE *PRIVATE EYE, TOO,* GOT THE IDEA THAT THE *HUSBAND* WAS USING A *BOOK* TO PLAN HIS WIFE'S MURDER. AND, BY GOD, IF, IN THE BOOK, THE *HUSBAND* DIDN'T *LOSE ONE TOO...*

YEP! MADE HIM *PAY* FOR IT. $2.50, LESS DEPRECIATION.

DO YOU HAVE THIS BOOK *IN* AT THE PRESENT TIME?

MY HEAD WAS WHIRLING AS I SAT THERE IN HARRY'S SILENT APARTMENT. HARRY *KNEW* ALL THIS, THEN. HE *KNEW* I'D FIND OUT ABOUT HIS BORROWING BOOKS... LOSING ONE. WHY DID HE *DO* IT? WHAT WAS HIS GAME? I LOOSENED MY TIGHTENING COLLAR AND READ ON. THE PRIVATE EYE IN THE BOOK WENT TO THE HUSBAND'S APARTMENT... LET HIMSELF IN WITH A MASTER KEY...

THINGS WERE GETTING *TOO CLOSE TO HOME.* EVERYTHING WAS *TOO PAT...TOO PARALLEL.* IF HARRY *KNEW,* FROM READING *'FALL GUY FOR MURDER'* THAT *I'D* COME TO THE APARTMENT, WHAT WAS HE *PLANNING?* I HAD TO READ ON TO *FIND OUT.* IN THE BOOK, THE *PRIVATE-EYE* FOUND THE BOOK AND SAT DOWN TO READ *IT...*

WAS THIS TO BE ONE OF THOSE CRAZY STORY CHAINS... LIKE TWO MIRRORS FACING EACH OTHER? A STORY IN A STORY IN A STORY, ETC.? I KEPT READING. IN THE BOOK, THE *PRIVATE-EYE* WAS READING! SUDDENLY THERE WAS A *SOUND* BEHIND HIM...

AND THE *HUSBAND* STEPPED OUT OF THE SHADOWS, GUN IN HAND. THE PRIVATE-EYE REACHED FOR *HIS... TOO LATE ...*

WHAT THE...

BLAM!

BLAM!

BLAM!

MY BLOOD FROZE. I STOPPED READING, LISTENING...

EXCEPT FOR THE TRAFFIC IN THE STREET FAR BELOW, THERE WAS NO SOUND. I SLIPPED MY GUN FROM MY SHOULDER-HOLSTER... KNOCKED OFF THE SAFETY-CATCH. HARRY'S TIMING WAS OFF. I STARTED READING FAST. I HAD TO KNOW WHAT THE *GIMMICK* WAS... THE *SOLUTION.* IN THE BOOK, THE FATALLY WOUNDED PRIVATE-EYE HEARD THE HUSBAND'S VOICE AS HE WAS DYING...

I STOPPED BY THE *DRUG-STORE* FOR CIGARETTES. I FOUND OUT YOU *LEARNED* ABOUT MY *READING HABITS.* I *KNEW* YOU'D COME BACK *HERE* TO *READ THE BOOK*... TO SEE JUST *HOW* I MURDERED MY WIFE.

I HAD TO READ FAST. HARRY WOULD BE HERE IN A MINUTE. IN THE BOOK, THE HUSBAND RAVED ON. THE PRIVATE EYE WAS FADING...

I'LL TELL THE COPS I *SHOT* YOU IN *SELF-DEFENSE.* I'LL TELL THEM THAT AFTER I *SHOT* YOU, YOU *CONFESSED MURDERING MY WIFE OUT OF JEALOUSY*... PACKING HER *THINGS* AND *REMOVING* THEM TO MAKE IT LOOK AS IF SHE *LEFT* ME. THEN, YOU CAME *BACK,* TO GET *ME! SIMPLE! SELF-DEFENSE!*

I PUT DOWN THE BOOK. *'FALL GUY FOR MURDER'!* IT WAS A *GOOD TITLE.* SO *THAT* WAS HARRY'S GAME. WELL, *NOT ME!* I WASN'T GOING TO BE THE *FALL GUY.* NOBODY EVER MADE A SUCKER OUT OF *ME...*

SELF-DEFENSE, EH? WELL, WE'LL *SEE* WHO'S GOING TO *KILL* IN *SELF-DEFENSE,* HARRY WILSON. *C'MON!* I'M *READY* FOR YOU!

I FINGERED THE TRIGGER OF MY REVOLVER NERVOUSLY. I MADE LIKE I WAS READING, BUT I DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING. I WAS LISTENING. AND THEN I HEARD IT, THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND BEHIND ME. I WHIRLED...FIRING...

BLAM!

THE SHOTS EXPLODED THROUGH THE APARTMENT, ECHOING AGAIN AND AGAIN AS I EMPTIED MY GUN. THE FIGURE IN THE SHADOWS SLUMPED TO THE FLOOR...

BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM

I GOT UP, GRINNING. '*FALL GUY FOR MURDER*' SLID OFF MY LAP ONTO THE FLOOR. I WALKED ACROSS THE LIVING ROOM. SOMETHING CAUGHT IN MY THROAT AND THEN ERUPTED THROUGH MY CLENCHED TEETH. A HOARSE CRY OF ANGUISH AND DISMAY...

GOOD GOD!

SHE LAY IN A POOL OF BLOOD... SIX BULLET HOLES IN HER CHEST...

EDITH! EDITH!

I WAS CRYING HYSTERICALLY WHEN I HEARD THE PHONE-DIAL CLICKING. HARRY WAS CALLING THE POLICE. HE HAD A GUN TRAINED ON ME...

IF YOU *WEREN'T* SUCH A *GOOD DETECTIVE*, MY LITTLE PLAN WOULD *NEVER* HAVE *WORKED SO WELL*, GREGG!

AFTER A WHILE, HARRY PUT DOWN THE PHONE. THE POLICE WERE ON THEIR WAY. HE GRINNED...

I *MET SOMEONE ELSE*, GREGG. *EDITH* STOOD IN MY WAY OF *HAPPINESS*. THANKS TO *YOU*, I'M *RID* OF HER.

THAT'S THE STORY. HARRY MADE *ME* KILL EDITH *FOR* HIM. IT WAS A DIABOLICALLY CLEVER SCHEME. I REMEMBER HOW HIS EVIL EYES TWINKLED AS THE SIRENS RESOUNDED BELOW... HOW HE PICKED UP THE BOOK I'D JUST READ...

AS FOR *THIS*... '*FALL GUY FOR MURDER*'... MY *WHOLE PLAN DEPENDED* ON *THIS BOOK*. YOU *SEE*, GREGG, *I WROTE IT!*

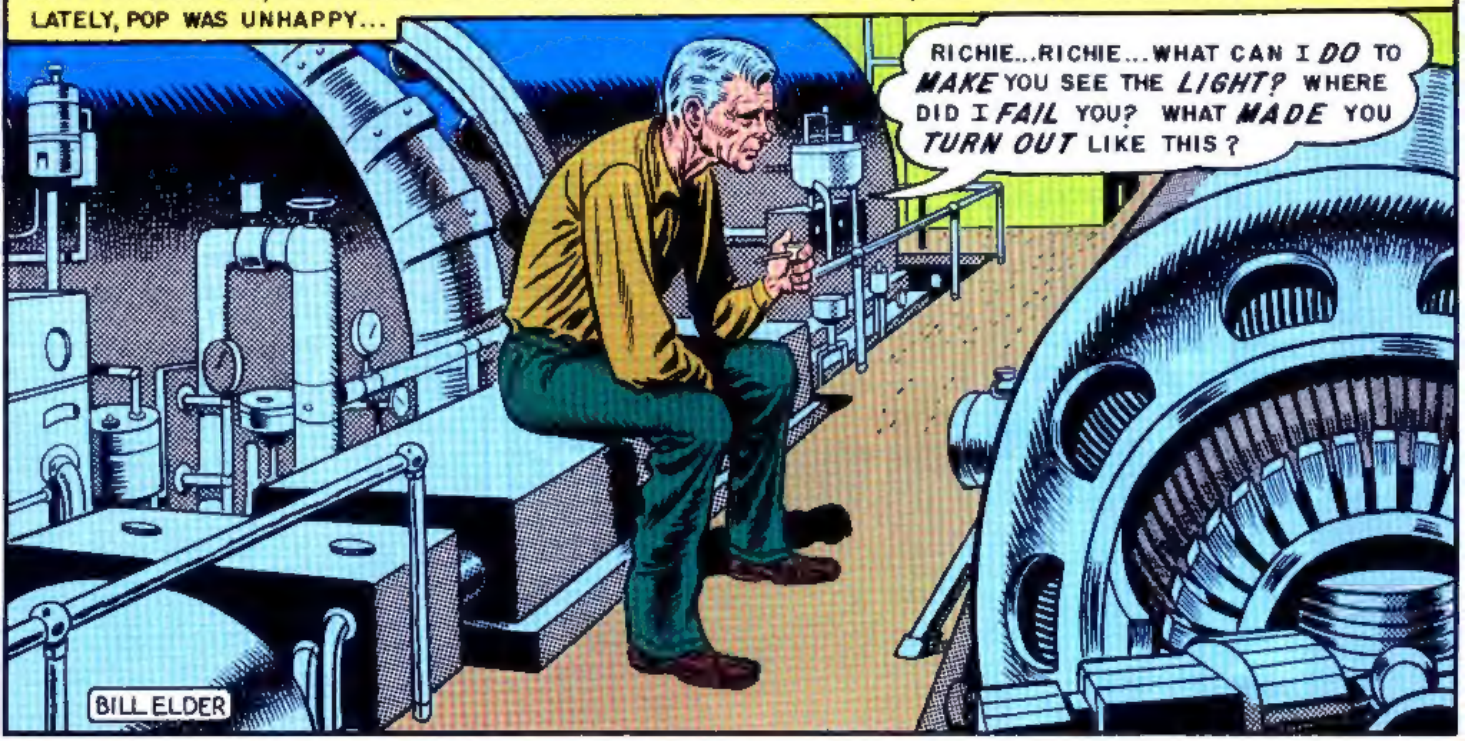
FALL GUY - MURDER

-THE END-

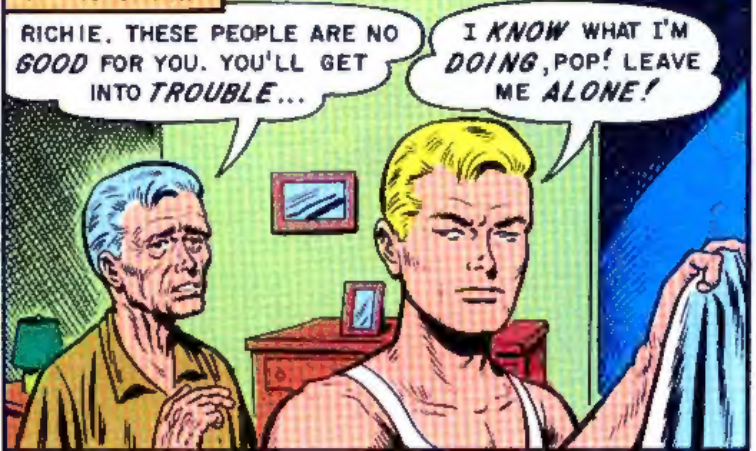
JUICE FOR THE RECORD!

THERE WERE JUST TWO THINGS THAT WERE IMPORTANT IN OLD POP MARTIN'S LIFE. THE FIRST WAS HIS ONLY SON, RICHARD, WHOM HE'D BEEN BOTH MOTHER AND FATHER TO EVER SINCE THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE WHEN RICHIE WAS JUST AN INFANT. AND THE SECOND WAS POP'S JOB AS CHIEF ELECTRICIAN AT THE CITY HOSPITAL. IT WAS A GREAT DEAL OF SATISFACTION TO POP TO KNOW THAT SO MANY PEOPLE'S LIVES DEPENDED UPON HIM... THAT HIS GROWING BOY'S FUTURE WAS IN HIS HANDS... AND THAT THE LIFE-BLOOD OF AN ENTIRE HOSPITAL FLOWED FROM THE GENERATORS AND GAUGES AND SWITCHES THAT HE CONTROLLED. THROUGH THE YEARS, POP NEVER FORGOT HIS RESPONSIBILITIES TO THOSE WHO DEPENDED UPON HIM. THAT'S WHY, LATELY, HE WOULD SIT BESIDE THE HUMMING GENERATORS, SURROUNDED BY THE MYRIAD OF DIALS AND FUSES, AND HIS EYES WOULD FILL WITH TEARS.

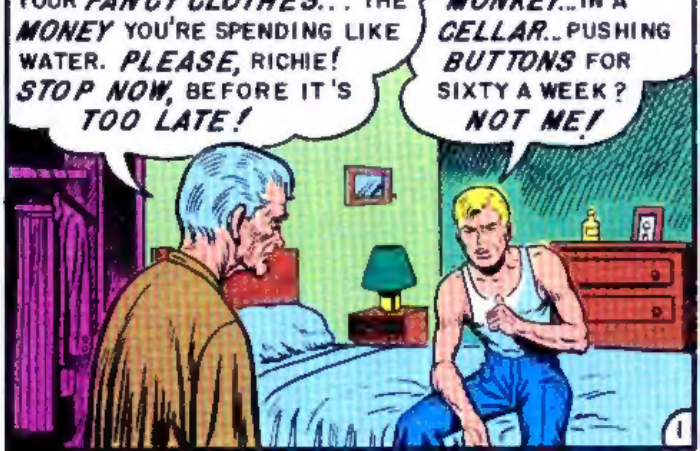
LATELY, POP WAS UNHAPPY...



SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, POP HAD SLIPPED UP. HE'D BEEN ABLE TO MASTER THE POWER PLANT THAT FED THE HOSPITAL TOWERING TWELVE FLOORS ABOVE HIM. A TWIST OF A RHEOSTAT, A THROWING OF A SWITCH, A TURNING OF A SCREW WAS ALL THAT WAS NEEDED TO CORRECT ANY TROUBLE THAT AROSE. BUT WITH RICHIE, POP WAS AT A LOSS. RICHIE WAS A LIVING THING. RICHIE HAD A MIND OF HIS OWN...



RICHIE WASN'T A MACHINE THAT RESPONDED TO POP'S TOUCH. RICHIE WASN'T AN INANIMATE THING WITHOUT FEELING. THERE WERE NO DIALS TO READ, NO METERS TO LET POP KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THAT TWISTED BRAIN OF HIS...


RITCHIE, *LISTEN* TO ME. I *KNOW* WHERE YOU'RE GETTING YOUR *FANCY CLOTHES*... THE *MONEY* YOU'RE SPENDING LIKE WATER. *PLEASE*, RICHIE! *STOP NOW*, BEFORE IT'S *TOO LATE!*
AND END UP LIKE *YOU?* A *GREASE-MONKEY*... IN A *CELLAR*... PUSHING *BUTTONS* FOR SIXTY A WEEK? *NOT ME!*

POP HAD ALWAYS FELT HIS RESPONSIBILITIES KEENLY. THE ELECTRICITY THAT POURED FROM HIS CELLAR-STATION INTO THE STERILIZERS AND MEDICAL MACHINES AND OPERATING-ROOMS THROUGHOUT THE HOSPITAL WAS THE SPARK WITH WHICH HUNDREDS OF LIVES WERE SAVED. HE KNEW THAT, AND PERHAPS HIS PERSPECTIVE HAD BECOME TOO ONE-SIDED TOWARD IT. PERHAPS HE'D MAGNIFIED IT TOO MUCH, NEGLECTING HIS PATERNAL DUTIES. NOW, THE ONE LIFE THAT REALLY MATTERED TO POP WAS BEING RUINED...

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, RICHIE?

OUT! STOP *QUESTIONING* ME. I'M NOT A *KID* ANYMORE.

AND THERE WERE THOSE AWFUL MORNINGS WHEN POP WOULD COME TO WORK AND RELIEVE THE NIGHT-MAN AND CHECK TO SEE THAT EVERYTHING WAS OPERATING CORRECTLY. AND THEN HE WOULD SIT DOWN BESIDE THE HUMMING MACHINERY AND OPEN THE MORNING PAPER AND READ ABOUT THE ROBBERIES...

WHAT MADE YOU *TURN OUT* LIKE THIS, RICHIE? WHAT DID I DO THAT WAS *WRONG?*

DAILY

POP KNEW THAT HIS SON WAS INVOLVED IN THOSE ROBBERIES. WHERE ELSE COULD A YOUNGSTER GET THE KIND OF MONEY RICHIE WOULD FLASH? WHY ELSE WOULD RICHIE HAVE A GUN? POP REMEMBERED THE NIGHT HE'D WALKED IN ON HIS SON WHILE HE WAS DRESSING...

RICHIE, I..

BLAST IT, POP! WHY DON'T YOU *KNOCK?*

POP REMEMBERED HOW HIS HEART HAD STOPPED WHEN HE'D SEEN THE EVIL-LOOKING HARNESS AND THE HOLSTER CONTAINING THE UGLY SNUB-NOSED REVOLVER HANGING FROM RICHIE'S SHOULDER...

RICHIE. WHAT... WHAT'S *THAT?*

WHAT DOES IT *LOOK* LIKE? IT'S A *ROD!*

...HOW HE'D PLEADED WITH THE BOY...

FOR GOD'S SAKE, RICHIE, NOT A *GUN! PLEASE!* PUT IT *AWAY!* DON'T *CARRY* IT! ONE OF THESE DAYS YOU'LL *USE* IT!

SHUT UP, POP! STOP *LECTURING!* LEAVE ME *ALONE!*

SOMETIMES, WHEN POP WAS ALL ALONE IN THE HOSPITAL GENERATOR ROOM... WHEN THE ONLY SOUND WAS THE WHINE OF THE MACHINERY AND THE ANXIOUS BEATING OF HIS ACHING HEART... POP WOULD TALK TO THE INANIMATE WIRES AND TRANSFORMERS...

HE'S NOT *REALLY BAD!* NOT *REALLY!* I...I *LET HIM DOWN.*

AND SOMETIMES POP HAD THE FEELING THAT THE MACHINERY UNDERSTOOD... THAT THE CHATTERING SPARKS, SKIPPING AROUND THE SPINNING ARMATURE, WERE WHISPERING TO HIM...

NO! IT *IS* MY FAULT HE WENT WRONG! *IT IS!* HE NEEDED A *MOTHER'S* LOVE! I WASN'T *WITH* HIM ENOUGH. I *FAILED* HIM!

THE AFTERNOON THAT IT HAPPENED, POP HAD COME HOME FROM WORK TO FIND THAT RICHIE WAS OUT AGAIN. POP WAS TORTURED WITH WORRY. THAT GUN OF RICHIE'S. IT WOULD GET HIM INTO TROUBLE YET. SERIOUS TROUBLE. SUDDENLY THE FRONT DOOR SLAMMED. ANGRY VOICES FILLED THE HOUSE...

LOOK, YOU LITTLE CRUMB! YOU'RE HOLDING OUT ON ME! THAT BAR WAS GOOD FOR THREE GRAND AT LEAST.

I TELL YOU THERE WAS ONLY FIVE HUNDRED BUCKS IN THE TILL!

IT WAS RICHIE. HE WAS ARGUING WITH SOMEONE. POP SLIPPED TO THE BEDROOM DOOR...

ALL RIGHT, KID! YOU ASKED FOR IT! NOBODY HOLDS OUT ON ERNIE BUTLER...

PUT DOWN THAT GUN, ERNIE! I'M TELLING YOU THE TRUTH! HERE.. HERE'S THE WHOLE PILE.

POP WATCHED IN HORROR AS RICHIE REACHED INTO HIS POCKET. ONLY HIS HAND DIDN'T COME OUT WITH MONEY... IT CAME OUT WITH A SNUB-NOSED REVOLVER BARKING ANGRILY AND SPITTING FLAME AT ERNIE BUTLER...

NO, RICHIE!

POP DARTED INTO THE LIVING ROOM. ERNIE PITCHED FORWARD...

YOU KILLED HIM! YOU KILLED HIM!

STAY OUT OF THIS, POP!

RICHIE SPUN AROUND ANGRILY, CURSING HIS FATHER'S INTERFERENCE. HE NEVER NOTICED THAT ERNIE, FROM HIS SPRAWLED POSITION ON THE FLOOR, RAISED HIS GUN WEAKLY AND...

GET BACK INTO THE BEDROO...

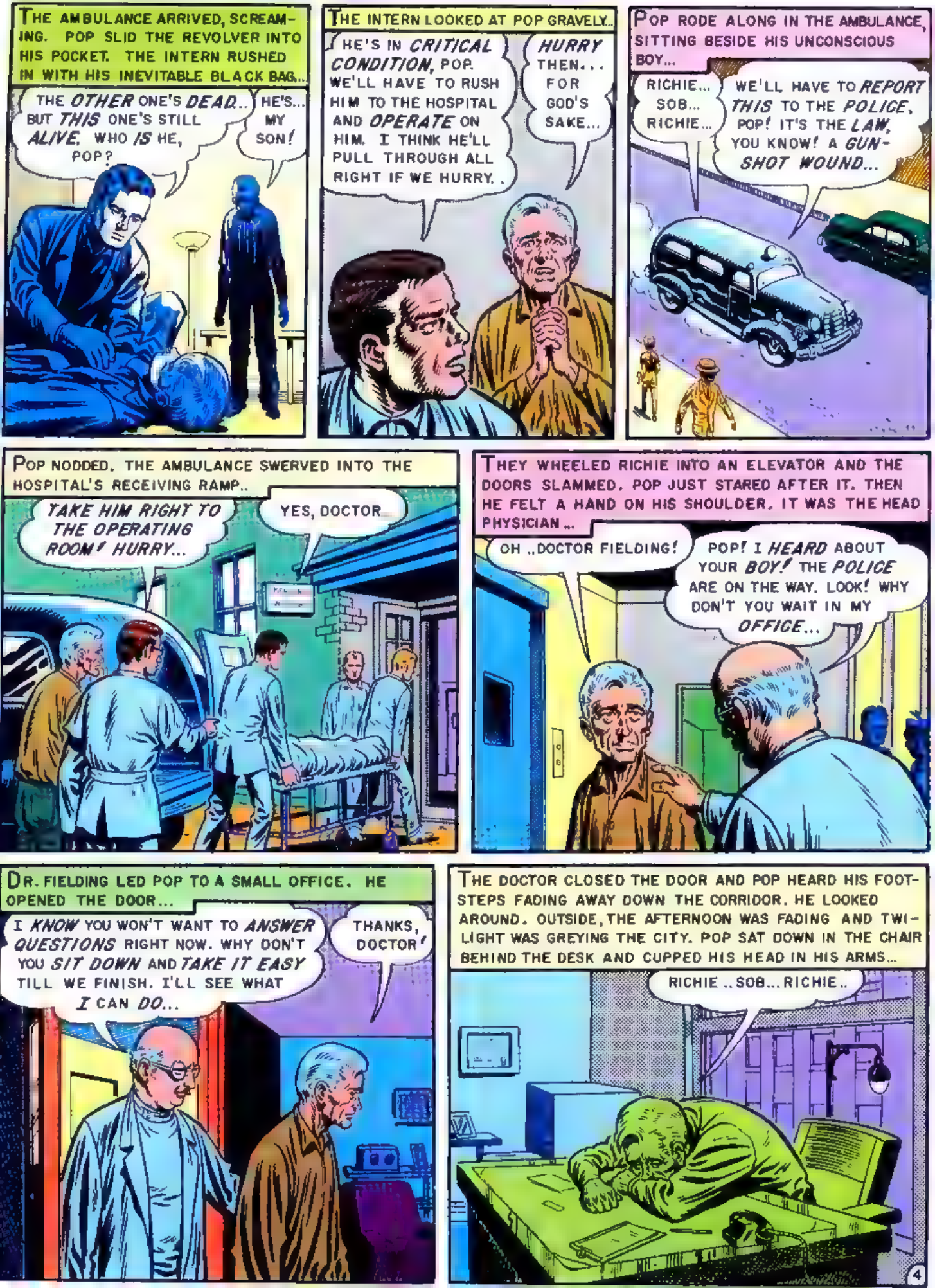
RICHIE!

RICHIE'S ANGRY EXPRESSION FROZE ON HIS FACE... THEN CHANGED TO ONE OF DISMAY. HE COUGHED, SPITTING BLOOD, AND SLUMPED TO THE FLOOR...

RICHIE! MY BOY.. SOB MY BOY...

POP BENT TEARFULLY AND LISTENED TO RICHIE'S HEARTBEAT. HE WAS STILL ALIVE, THANK GOD. HE PRIED THE SNUB-NOSED REVOLVER FROM HIS SON'S HAND AND WENT TO THE TELEPHONE...

SEND AN AMBULANCE AROUND...195 BIRCH.. HURRY..HURRY...SOB...


THE AMBULANCE ARRIVED, SCREAMING. POP SLID THE REVOLVER INTO HIS POCKET. THE INTERN RUSHED IN WITH HIS INEVITABLE BLACK BAG...
THE OTHER ONE'S DEAD... BUT THIS ONE'S STILL ALIVE. WHO IS HE, POP?
HE'S... MY SON!
THE INTERN LOOKED AT POP GRAVELY...
HE'S IN CRITICAL CONDITION, POP. WE'LL HAVE TO RUSH HIM TO THE HOSPITAL AND OPERATE ON HIM. I THINK HE'LL PULL THROUGH ALL RIGHT IF WE HURRY..
HURRY THEN... FOR GOD'S SAKE...
POP RODE ALONG IN THE AMBULANCE, SITTING BESIDE HIS UNCONSCIOUS BOY...
RICHIE... SOB... RICHIE...
WE'LL HAVE TO REPORT THIS TO THE POLICE, POP! IT'S THE LAW, YOU KNOW! A GUN-SHOT WOUND...
POP NODDED. THE AMBULANCE SWERVED INTO THE HOSPITAL'S RECEIVING RAMP..
TAKE HIM RIGHT TO THE OPERATING ROOM! HURRY...
YES, DOCTOR
THEY WHEELED RICHIE INTO AN ELEVATOR AND THE DOORS SLAMMED. POP JUST STARED AFTER IT. THEN HE FELT A HAND ON HIS SHOULDER. IT WAS THE HEAD PHYSICIAN...
OH ..DOCTOR FIELDING!
POP! I HEARD ABOUT YOUR BOY! THE POLICE ARE ON THE WAY. LOOK! WHY DON'T YOU WAIT IN MY OFFICE...
DR. FIELDING LED POP TO A SMALL OFFICE. HE OPENED THE DOOR...
I KNOW YOU WON'T WANT TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RIGHT NOW. WHY DON'T YOU SIT DOWN AND TAKE IT EASY TILL WE FINISH. I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO...
THANKS, DOCTOR!
THE DOCTOR CLOSED THE DOOR AND POP HEARD HIS FOOTSTEPS FADING AWAY DOWN THE CORRIDOR. HE LOOKED AROUND. OUTSIDE, THE AFTERNOON WAS FADING AND TWILIGHT WAS GREYING THE CITY. POP SAT DOWN IN THE CHAIR BEHIND THE DESK AND CUPPED HIS HEAD IN HIS ARMS...
RICHIE ..SOB... RICHIE..
4

AFTER A WHILE POP LOOKED AROUND. IN THE DIM HALF-LIGHT, HE COULD SEE THE DICTAPHONE SITTING ON THE STAND BESIDE THE DESK. OUTSIDE, ANOTHER SIREN WAILED TO A STOP

THE *POLICE!* THEY'RE *HERE!*

POP REACHED INTO HIS POCKET. HE BROUGHT OUT THE SNUB-NOSED REVOLVER. HE STARED AT IT FOR A FEW MINUTES. OUTSIDE, HE COULD HEAR VOICES...

WELL, WHERE *IS* THE OLD MAN? WE'VE GOT A LOT OF *QUESTIONS* TO ASK HIM.

I DON'T KNOW! HE CAME *IN* WITH THEM, BUT THEN HE *DISAPPEARED.*

THE VOICES DRIFTED OFF. POP STARED AT THE DICTAPHONE...

MY *BOY!* HE'S A *MURDERER!* BUT IF THEY *SAVE* HIM, HE'LL *DIE IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR.* UNLESS...

POP LOOKED AT THE GUN. THEN BACK TO THE DICTAPHONE...

MAYBE... MAYBE HE'S LEARNED HIS LESSON! MAYBE ALL HE NEEDS IS ANOTHER CHANCE...

POP FUMBLED IN THE DARKNESS. HE KNEW WHAT HE HAD TO DO. HE PLACED AN EMPTY CYLINDER INTO THE DICTAPHONE AND TURNED ON THE SWITCH. HE TOOK THE MICROPHONE IN HAND.

THIS IS *MY CONFESSION..*

POP SWUNG AROUND IN THE CHAIR SO THAT HE COULD STARE OUT INTO THE NIGHT THAT NOW BLANKETED EVERYTHING IN DARKNESS, URGING LIGHTS TO BLINK ON IN OFFICE BUILDINGS ACROSS THE AVENUE. A TEAR STOLE DOWN HIS CREASED FACE...

I, ARNOLD 'POP' MARTIN, HEREBY CONFESS TO THE MURDER OF ERNIE BUTLER. WHEN YOU PLAY BACK THIS RECORDING I WILL BE DEAD... BY MY OWN HAND...

POP MARTIN'S VOICE WAVERED...

MY SON IS A GOOD BOY! HE WAS TRYING TO GO STRAIGHT.. TRYING TO BREAK AWAY FROM ERNIE BUTLER. MR. BUTLER CAME TO OUR HOUSE THIS AFTERNOON. HE THREATENED RICHARD WITH A GUN. I KILLED ERNIE BUTLER AND HIS GUN WENT OFF, WOUNDING MY SON. NOW I AM GOING TO USE THE GUN I KILLED ERNIE BUTLER WITH ON MYSELF. GOOD-BYE...

POP TURNED THE SWITCH AND TOOK OUT THE DICTAPHONE CYLINDER. HE STARED AT IT FOR A SHORT TIME, HOLDING IT UP SO THAT THE LIGHT FROM THE STREET LAMP OUTSIDE GLEAMED ON ITS SHINING, WAX SURFACE.

THIS IS YOUR *SECOND CHANCE*, RICHIE.

POP FELT THAT THIS WAS RIGHT. THIS WAS WHAT HE HAD TO DO. HE WRAPPED THE CYLINDER IN A PIECE OF HOSPITAL STATIONARY AND HE SCRAWLED ACROSS IT..

FOR THE POLICE HOMICIDE SQUAD. FROM A. "POP" MARTIN ☆

HE SLID THE CYLINDER INTO HIS POCKET AND LIFTED THE GUN TO HIS TEMPLE.

POP! YOU HERE?

DOCTOR FIELDING STOOD IN THE DOORWAY OF THE DARK OFFICE. POP LISTENED TO HIS HORRIFIED VOICE.. LOWERING THE GUN...

POP! THE *LIGHTS HAVE GONE OUT! SEE WHAT'S WRONG! QUICKLY!*

THE *LIGHTS*... OH, *LORD!*

POP DASHED FROM THE OFFICE INTO THE PITCH-BLACK HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. A POLICEMAN COLLARED HIM AS DOCTOR FIELDING SCREAMED...

LET HIM GO. HE'S GOT TO FIX THE LIGHTS!

BUT WE'VE GOT SOME *QUESTIONS*...

HERE, OFFICER, *THIS* WILL ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS!

POP HANDED THE POLICEMAN THE DICTAPHONE CYLINDER WITH HIS RECORDED CONFESSION AND DARTED DOWN THE CORRIDOR TO THE BASEMENT STAIRS...

IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE!* THOSE GENERATORS HAVE *NEVER FAILED BEFORE*...

THE SEARCHLIGHT WAS IN ITS USUAL RACK, BUT THE FRIENDLY HUM THAT POP HAD GROWN TO LOVE WAS GONE. THE DIALS AND GAUGES POINTED TO ZERO. THE POWER-PLANT HAD STOPPED... COMPLETELY..

THE AUXILIARY EMERGENCY UNIT...

EVEN THE AUXILIARY EMERGENCY UNIT REFUSED TO START. POP SCREAMED, REALIZING SUDDENLY...
MY BOY! HE'S IN THE OPERATING ROOM! HE'LL DIE! OH, LORD... HELP ME!
POP TRIED EVERYTHING. HE SWITCHED FUSES... THREW LEVERS... TURNED DIALS. NOTHING HELPED. FOR FIVE MINUTES HE WORKED FURIOUSLY, CRYING... PLEADING... SOBBING...
OH, PLEASE... PLEASE START... SOB... PLEASE. MY BOY...
POP COULD FIND NOTHING WRONG WITH THE GENERATOR MACHINERY, AND THEN, AS IF BY MAGIC, THE GENERATORS STARTED. THE LIGHTS BLINKED ON. POP SIGHED...
THANK GOD...
POP WAS ABOUT TO TAKE THE GUN OUT OF HIS POCKET WHEN DOCTOR FIELDING CAME DOWN THE BASEMENT STAIRS LOOKING VERY TIRED...
I'M . I'M SORRY, POP! WE DID ALL WE COULD! WE MIGHT HAVE SAVED HIM IF THE LIGHTS HADN'T GONE OUT. HE... HE DIED A FEW MINUTES AGO.
RICHIE... SOB! RICHIE... DEAD!
POP'S WORLD SEEMED TO SUDDENLY COLLAPSE AROUND HIM. ALL HIS WORK. WASTED. TWENTY YEARS OF BRINGING A BOY TO MANHOOD... USELESS. HIS PLANS... HIS SACRIFICES... THE CONFESSION...
OH, LORD! THE CONFESSION! IT WON'T DO ANY GOOD, AND I'LL DIE FOR IT...
HEY! YOU! POP MARTIN!
IT WAS A DETECTIVE. HE STOOD AT THE HEAD OF THE BASEMENT STAIRS, THE DICTAPHONE CYLINDER IN HIS HAND.
WHAT'S THE IDEA? THIS THING'S BLANK. NOT A WORD ON IT! THIS A GAG OR SOMETHIN'? C'MON UPSTAIRS! I WANT TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS!
HUH? BLANK? OH YES, OFFICER... SOB... YES... I'M COMING!
FOR HOSPITAL OPERATING-ROOM LIGHTS AND EQUIPMENT AREN'T THE ONLY THINGS THAT NEED ELECTRICITY. DICTAPHONES... TOO...
AND TODAY, IF YOU EVER VISITED THE GENERATOR ROOM OF THE CITY HOSPITAL, YOU'D FIND POP MARTIN DOWN THERE SITTING BESIDE THE HUMMING MACHINERY LISTENING TO THE WHISPERING SPARKS CRACKLING AROUND THE WHIRLING ARMATURE. AND YOU'D HEAR HIM TALKING TO THE FUSES AND WIRES AND DIALS. BECAUSE NO ONE CAN CONVINCE HIM THAT THEY'RE NOT ALIVE...
THE END

FROZEN ASSETS!

I REACHED FOR THE HANDLE OF THE DEEP-FREEZE AND PULLED. IT WAS ALMOST OVER. IN ANOTHER FEW HOURS, THE DOCTOR WOULD COME AND SHAKE HIS HEAD SADLY AND TRY TO FIND A FEW AWKWARD WORDS OF CONSOLATION FOR THE GRIEVING WIDOW. THEN, HE WOULD GO AWAY AND MAKE OUT HIS REPORT AND HELEN WOULD HAVE THE INHERITANCE.. TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS. AND WE WOULD GO AWAY TOGETHER AND TRY TO FORGET ALL THIS. AND WITH THAT KIND OF MONEY, IT WOULDN'T BE TOO HARD. HELEN GASPED AND UTTERED A SHARP LITTLE CRY OF HORROR AS THE DEEP-FREEZE LID SWUNG OPEN JASPER WENTWORTH, HELEN'S LATE HUSBAND, SAT DOUBLED-UP INSIDE THE FROST-COVERED BOX, HIS KNEES AGAINST HIS CHEST, HIS FLESH WAXEN-WHITE, HIS BLIND EYES STARING...

MORTIE...GASP I'M *SCARED!*

DON'T WORRY, BABY. EVERYTHING WILL BE *OKAY*. ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS GET HIM *UPSTAIRS*.. INTO THE *BATHTUB*..*THAW HIM OUT*...AND CALL THE *DOCTOR*.

I PULLED JASPER'S STIFF CORPSE FROM THE DEEP-FREEZE AND CARRIED IT UP THE BASEMENT STAIRS INTO THE BATHROOM OFF THE MASTER-BEDROOM. I DROPPED HIM INTO THE TUB AND HE SAT THERE, RIGIDLY, AS IF CONTEMPLATING BATHING HIMSELF WITH HIS CLOTHES ON. HELEN STOOD BESIDE ME, STARING DOWN AT HIM. I LOOKED AT MY WATCH...

IT'S *11 P.M.!* HE SHOULD BE *THAWED* BY *DAWN*. THEN WE *DRESS* HIM IN HIS *PAJAMAS*, PUT HIM INTO *BED*, AND YOU GO INTO YOUR ACT...

MORTIE! WHAT IF THE DOCTOR *SUSPECTS?*

I TURNED TO HELEN AND SHE CAME INTO MY ARMS, PRESSING HER FULL YOUNG BODY AGAINST MINE. SHE LOOKED UP AT ME WITH QUIVERING LIPS AND I KISSED THEM REASSURINGLY...

WHAT'S THERE TO *SUSPECT*, DARLING? YOU TRIED TO *WAKE* YOUR HUSBAND AND HE *DIDN'T RESPOND*, SO YOU CALLED THE *DOCTOR*. THERE'S NO REASON TO SUSPECT *ANYTHING!*

I *HOPE* YOU'RE *RIGHT*, MORT. OH, IF *ONLY* JASPER HADN'T *CAUGHT* US THAT NIGHT. IF ONLY HE HADN'T *HEARD*...

I STUDIED THE STIFF CORPSE, SITTING IN THE TUB.

YES. IF JASPER HADN'T *FOUND OUT* ABOUT OUR *PLAN*... IF HE HADN T DISCOVERED THE *REAL REASON* YOU *MARRIED* HIM HE'D BE *ALIVE TODAY!* AND WE'D BE *MURDERING HIM* ***NOW*** INSTEAD OF *FOUR MONTHS AGO!*

IT ALL BEGAN THE DAY I WAS CALLED TO JASPER WENTWORTHS RICH OLD AUNT'S PALATIAL ESTATE. I WAS SUMMONED IN MY PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY AS A LAWYER TO DRAW UP MILDRED WENTWORTH'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT. MILDRED WENTWORTH WAS GOING TO DIE...

THAT UPON MY DEATH, MY *ENTIRE ESTATE*.. CONSISTING OF THIS HOUSE AND GROUNDS AND ALL MY STOCKS AND BONDS AND BANK ACCOUNTS, VALUED AT OVER TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS SHALL GO TO *MY NEPHEW, JASPER WENTWORTH* AND TO HIS HEIRS. *IF*, HOWEVER..

AND THE OLD GAL HAD STUCK IN THE BIG 'IF' THAT HAD CAUSED THE TROUBLE...

IF, HOWEVER, *JASPER WENTWORTH'S DEATH* WERE TO *PRECEDE* MINE, *REGARDLESS* OF HIS *EXISTING HEIRS*, MY *ESTATE* SHALL *THEN* GO TO THE *STATE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL* FOR USE AS A FUND WITH WHICH TO ERECT.

MILDRED WENTWORTH'S DOCTOR HAD TOLD ME CONFIDENTIALLY..

NO TELLING *HOW* LONG SHE'LL *LIVE*. MAYBE A *MONTH*.. MAYBE *SIX*. NO *MORE* THAN A *YEAR*.

I *SEE* WELL. *THANK* YOU, DOCTOR.

SO I'D GONE TO HELEN WITH MY PLAN.

DON'T YOU *SEE*, HONEY? IF YOU WERE TO *MARRY* JASPER WENTWORTH, YOU'D BE *NEXT IN LINE* FOR THE *DOUGH* WHEN THE OLD LADY DIES.

BUT WHAT ABOUT *HIM*, *JASPER*?

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN TO *HIM* AFTER THAT. AN *AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT*... AN *UNFORTUNATE FALL*.. A *HIT-AND-RUN DRIVER*. AND YOU'D BE A *WEALTHY WIDOW*. WE D *TAKE IT EASY* THE REST OF OUR *LIVES*.

ALL RIGHT, MORT. I'LL *HATE* EVERY MINUTE I'M *WITH* HIM WANTING TO BE WITH *YOU*... BUT..WELL, *WHEN CAN I MEET HIM?*

I ARRANGED EVERYTHING. SPEED WAS ESSENTIAL. WITHIN A WEEK, HELEN HAD MET JASPER AND UNLEASHED HER FEMININE CHARMS UPON HIM. AND HELEN *HAD* WHAT TO *UNLEASH*. AT THE END OF A MONTH, THEY WERE MARRIED..

SO LONG, MORT! WE'LL, SEE YOU AFTER THE HONEYMOON.

AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT YOUR *AUNT*, JASPER. SHE'S *RESTING COMFORTABLY*.

IT WAS DONE. WE'D GOTTEN IN UNDER THE WIRE. HELEN AND JASPER WENT OFF ON THEIR HONEYMOON, AND I STARTED PLANNING THE NEXT STEP IN OUR SCHEME.

NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS MAKE SURE *JASPER* LIVES UNTIL HIS *AUNT KICKS OFF* AND HE INHERITS THE ESTATE. *THEN*...

SOON AFTER, JASPER AND HELEN HAD RETURNED FROM THEIR HONEYMOON AND I'D GONE TO SEE THEM. THEY'D RENTED A SMALL HOUSE IN THE SUBURBS...

IT'S A *LOVELY* PLACE, YOU TWO. I HOPE YOU'RE BOTH *VERY HAPPY HERE.*

IT HAS *ALL* THE LATEST MODERN *CONVENIENCES*, MORT. *DISHWASHER, DEEP-FREEZE*

WE WAITED FOR AN OPPORTUNITY, AND WHEN JASPER WAS CALLED TO THE PHONE, HELEN FLEW INTO MY ARMS...

OH, MORT. IT'S BEEN *HORRIBLE! HOW'S HIS AUNT?*

SHE'S *STUBBORN*, THAT OLD BATTLE-AXE. IT *WON'T* BE *LONG*, THOUGH. A *MONTH*, MAYBE

IT WAS AN EVENING IN APRIL, ALMOST A MONTH LATER, THAT IT HAPPENED. HELEN HAD MANAGED TO INVITE ME FOR DINNER. SHE KEPT LOOKING AT ME ALL DURING THE MEAL, BUT LUCKILY JASPER WAS TOO BUSY ENJOYING HIS OYSTERS TO NOTICE...

WHY SO *QUIET*, MORT? HOW'S THE OLD LADY?

WHY, SHE'S *DOING ALL RIGHT, CONSIDERING..*

AFTER DINNER, JASPER ANNOUNCED...

WELL, I'VE GOT A *CARD GAME* AT THE *CLUB* TONIGHT, MORT. CAN I *DRIVE YOU DOWNTOWN?*

WHY...*NO*, THANKS, JASPER. *MY CAR'S OUTSIDE.*

JASPER LEFT AND HELEN AND I WERE ALONE...

DARLING...DARLING... I CAN'T GO *ON* WITH THIS MUCH LONGER. WHY DOESN'T SHE *DIE* ALREADY?

IT'LL BE *SOON*, BABY. SHE'S *FADING FAST*. JUST *GRIT YOUR TEETH* AND *BEAR WITH IT* A LITTLE LONGER...

I HELD HER CLOSE AND SHE KISSED ME HUNGRILY...

I *HATE* HIM. I CAN'T *STAND* HIM. IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE *TWO HUNDRED GRAND*, I'D..

WHAT WAS *THAT?*

SO...

IT WAS JASPER. HE'D FORGOTTEN HIS WALLET. HE'D COME BACK AND HE'D HEARD EVERYTHING..
SO THAT'S WHY YOU MARRIED ME! YOU DIDN'T LOVE ME! ALL YOU WERE INTERESTED IN WAS MY INHERITANCE...
MORT! HE HEARD...
TOO BAD...
JASPER NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT HIM. I DOVE AT HIM AND WE WENT DOWN AND I HELD HIM WHILE I SCREAMED AT HELEN...
GET SOME CHLOROFORM AND SOME COTTON... QUICKLY...
YES...YES...
HELEN BROUGHT THE CHLOROFORM, AND JASPER'S STRUGGLING SUBSIDED. SOON, HE WENT LIMP...
IS HE... IS HE DEAD?
NO! JUST UNCONSCIOUS! BUT I'M AFRAID WE'LL HAVE TO KILL HIM! HE KNOWS EVERYTHING, NOW...
AND THEN I REMEMBERED THE OLD LADY'S BIG 'IF'...
OH, LORD! WE CAN'T KILL HIM. IF HE DIES BEFORE THE OLD LADY DOES, YOU DON'T GET THE MONEY. IT GOES TO A FOUNDLING HOSPITAL.
OH, NO! ALL THESE MONTHS.. ALL THIS WORK... WASTED...
SUDDENLY I GOT AN IDEA. I'D REMEMBERED HE'D MENTIONED SOMETHING ABOUT A DEEP-FREEZE...
YES. IT'S IN THE CELLAR. WHY?
IT'S THE ONLY WAY! WE'LL PUT HIM INTO THE DEEP-FREEZE UNTIL HIS AUNT PASSES AWAY!
I CARRIED JASPER'S UNCONSCIOUS BODY DOWN INTO THE BASEMENT..
THEN, A FEW WEEKS AFTER SHE KICKS OFF, WE'LL THAW IT, AND IT'LL APPEAR AS IF JASPER HAD JUST DIED..
BUT, MORT. HE'S ONLY UNCONSCIOUS. YOU'RE GOING TO FREEZE HIM TO DEATH
EXACTLY. NOW START UNLOADING THE FROZEN FOODS SO I CAN DUMP HIM IN...
ALL RIGHT, BUT I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
4

So we placed Jasper in the deep freeze and locked it shut. After a while, he came to and we listened to his muffled screams and kicking and pounding...

Oh, God, Mort! I can't *take* it..

It'll be *over* soon, baby. *C'mon*, let's go *upstairs*. It's been a *long time*...

The next morning, we went downstairs and looked in the freezer. Jasper was frozen solid

Now, *all* we do is *wait*. Just *cover up* for him when people ask. It *won't* be hard! Don't answer the *phone*... Make believe *you're out*...

Come see me *often*, Mort, darling! And let me know as soon as the *old lady dies*...

April faded, and May came and went, and still old Mildred Wentworth didn't die...

Thank goodness she's in a *coma* now, so she can't *ask* to see Jasper.

I don't *sleep* nights, Mort, knowing that *he's* down there in the *cellar!*

June passed and July crept by. Then on the 4th of August.

Helen! Helen.. she's *dead!*

Oh, *thank God*. Now we can get *on* with this.

Now, four months after we'd put him into the freezer, we'd taken Jasper's body upstairs and placed it in the bathtub to thaw. I stared down at the corpse sitting stiffly in the tub...

Yes. If Jasper hadn't *found out* about our *plan*, we'd be *murdering* him now instead of waiting for him to *thaw*.

By dawn, the frost had left the corpse and only the stiffness of death remained. We dressed it in pajamas and placed it in bed. Then Helen called the doctor. She's a pretty good little actress, Helen

Yes, doctor. Sob yes come *quickly!* He just *lies* there! He won't *get up!* I I *think*... sob sob oh, *hurry!*

The doctor came and shook his head..

I'm *sorry*, Mrs. Went worth. *He's dead*. *Been* dead for *several hours*, I'd say

He *said* he didn't *feel well*. He went to bed *early* last night *right after supper*. About *nine*

THE DOCTOR LISTENED TO THE STORY HELEN AND I HAD COOKED UP. HE MADE A PHONE CALL AND THEY CAME AND TOOK JASPER'S BODY AWAY...

SOB... SOB...

AFTER THEY'D CLEARED OUT, HELEN GRINNED AT ME...

WELL? HOW WAS I?

PERFECT. I TOLD YOU IT WOULD WORK.

BUT ABOUT AN HOUR LATER, THE DOORBELL RANG. THERE WERE TWO MEN OUTSIDE...

WE'RE FROM POLICE HEADQUARTERS. YOU'D BETTER COME ALONG WITH US.

POLICE... BUT...WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH US?

THEY TOOK US DOWN TO HEADQUARTERS. THEN THEY TOLD US...

WHEN YOUR DOCTOR REPORTED THAT MR. WENTWORTH HAD *DIED WITHOUT A PHYSICIAN* ACTUALLY IN *ATTENDANCE*, WE PERFORMED A *ROUTINE AUTOPSY!*

AN *AUTOPSY!*

GASP...

POLICE

WE *KNOW* THAT YOUR HUSBAND *DIDN'T DIE LAST NIGHT*, MRS. WENTWORTH! WE KNOW HE'S BEEN *DEAD* SINCE *APRIL*, AT *LEAST!*

MORT! YOU SAID...

ALL RIGHT. ALL RIGHT. WE ADMIT IT! HE *DIED BEFORE* HIS *AUNT DID*, AND MRS. WENTWORTH WANTED THE *INHERITANCE*, SO WE PUT JASPER'S *DEAD BODY* INTO THE *DEEP-FREEZE*. HE'D HAD A *HEART-ATTACK*...

IT WAS A DESPERATE CHANCE. WE HAD TO BEAT A MURDER RAP. IT WAS THE ONLY WAY. BUT THE DETECTIVE JUST SMILED AND SHOOK HIS HEAD...

SORRY! JASPER WENTWORTH DIED OF *ASPHYXIATION*... DUE TO *FREEZING TO DEATH*. AND WE FOUND *TRACES OF CHLOROFORM* IN HIS *LUNGS*. JASPER WAS *ALIVE* WHEN YOU LOCKED HIM IN THAT FREEZER. WE'RE *HOLDING YOU BOTH FOR MURDER!*

JUST *ONE THING*, OFFICER...

THEY HAD US. I HADN'T COUNTED ON AN *AUTOPSY*. BUT I *HAD TO KNOW*...

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT HE'D BEEN *DEAD* SINCE *APRIL?*

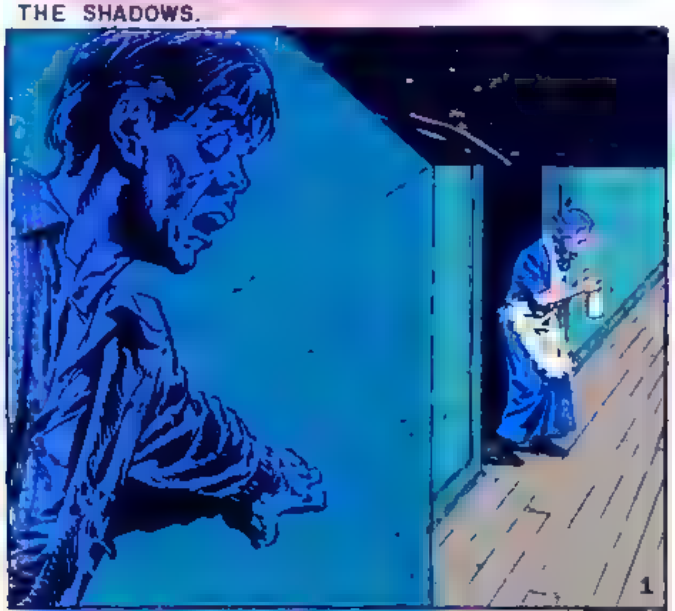
AS A MATTER OF FACT, *THAT* WAS WHAT MADE US *SUSPECT* MURDER! *MRS. WENTWORTH* SAID HE'D GONE TO *BED* RIGHT AFTER *EATING!* THE *FIRST* THING WE DISCOVERED WHEN WE CUT JASPER OPEN WAS THAT HE'D EATEN *OYSTERS* FOR HIS *LAST MEAL*. *OYSTERS AREN'T IN SEASON!* HAVEN'T BEEN SINCE *APRIL!*

FROM HERE TO INSANITY

YOUR RACING HEART POUNDS LOUDLY IN YOUR CHEST AND YOU FEEL ITS THROBBING IN YOUR THROAT... ALMOST CHOKING OFF EACH BREATH YOUR STARVING LUNGS SUCK IN. YOU REACH THE TOP FLOOR LANDING AND FLING YOURSELF WILDLY DOWN THE LONG DIM HALL TOWARD THE STAIRCASE LEADING TO THE ROOF. IN A MOMENT YOU'LL BE SAFE. IN A MOMENT YOU'LL BE LEAPING OVER PARAPETS, CROSSING DOWN THE LONG BLOCK OF TENEMENT ROOFTOPS, ELUDING YOUR PURSUERS. ABOVE YOU ARE THE STARS AND THE NIGHT SKY AND THE FRESH CLEAN AIR OF FREEDOM. YOU BOUND, GASPING, UP THE ROOF-STAIRS TWO AT A TIME. AND THEN YOU SEE IT, AND YOUR BLOODY HAND CLUTCHES YOUR SLOBBERING MOUTH, STIFFLING THE HOARSE ANIMAL-CRY OF DISMAY THAT ERUPTS FROM YOUR LIPS...

YOU STARE AT THE METAL ROOF-DOOR IN DISBELIEF. THE PAD-LOCK IS A STEEL FACE, GRINNING AT YOU. YOU SINK TO YOUR KNEES IN EXHAUSTION. YOU CAN'T GO BACK DOWN. THE POLICE ARE DOWN THERE, SEARCHING THE BUILDING FOR YOU... KNOCKING ON DOORS... QUESTIONING THE TENENTS...

SUDDENLY, ON THE LANDING BELOW, A RUSTY BOLT SQUEALS IN ITS HOUSING AND A DOOR CREAKS OPEN. A PALE WRINKLED FACE PEERS OUT. AN OLD WOMAN. SHE LOOKS UP AND DOWN THE DESERTED SILENT HALL, AND THEN SWINGS THE DOOR WIDE. SHE STEPS OUT, CLUTCHING A GLITTERING MILK-BOTTLE IN HER VEINED WHITE HAND. YOU COWER BACK INTO THE SHADOWS.



THE OLD WOMAN HOBBLES OUT OF HER FLAT AND BENDS WEARILY, PLACING THE MILK-BOTTLE ON THE HALL FLOOR BESIDE THE DOOR-JAMB. AND YOU SEE YOUR ONE CHANCE TO ESCAPE...

I COULD *HIDE* IN HER *APARTMENT* UNTIL THEY'VE *FINISHED SEARCHING!*

YOU LEAP DOWN THE STAIRS, EXPLODING UPON THE OLD WOMAN, PUSHING HER BACK INSIDE, CLASPING YOUR HAIRY HAND OVER HER DRY STARTLED MOUTH...

SHUT UP! ONE WORD AND I'LL *KILL YOU!*

SHE STARES AT YOU WITH HORROR IN HER WIDE MILKY EYES. YOU KICK THE DOOR SHUT BEHIND YOU...

I *MEAN* IT! *DON'T CRY OUT! DO* WHAT YOU'RE *TOLD*... AND YOU *WON'T* GET *HURT! UNDERSTAND?*

SHE NODS AND YOU RELEASE YOUR HOLD. SHE BACKS AWAY FROM YOU... TERROR SCRAWLED IN THE AGE-LINES OF HER BLANCHED FACE... HER FRAIL BODY TREMBLING. YOU TURN AND LOCK THE DOOR...

WHAT DO YOU *WANT?* I'M.. I'M AN *OLD WOMAN!* I *HAVE NOTHING* HERE! TAKE WHAT YOU *WANT* AND *GO.* I *B-BEG* OF YOU!

FORGET IT, LADY! I'M *STAYING!* THE *POLICE* ARE DOWNSTAIRS AND THEY'RE *LOOKING* FOR ME!

HER EYES ARE GLUED TO YOUR FACE AND THERE IS HATE AND FEAR GLOWING IN THEM. HER LIPS QUIVER, MOUTHING EACH WORD YOU GROWL...

THE *POLICE?!* THEN... *YOU'RE... YOU'RE* THAT *MANIAC* THEY'RE..

DON'T *SAY* THAT WORD! DON'T *EVER SAY THAT TO ME AGAIN!*

HER EYES FILL WITH TEARS. SHE PLEADS WITH YOU.. WHIMPERING...

I'M... *SORRY!* I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO... OH, *PLEASE! I NEVER DID ANYTHING TO YOU. PLEASE GO AWAY!* I WON'T *TELL* THEM YOU WERE *HERE!*

SIT DOWN! AND *KEEP QUIET!* JUST *DO* AS YOU'RE *TOLD!*

JUST LIKE THE OTHERS... BEGGING... PLEADING.. FRIGHTENED... CRYING. YOU'D LIKE TO CLOSE YOUR FINGERS AROUND HER SCRAWNY NECK AND STOP HER BLABBERING, BUT YOU CAN'T YOU *NEED* HER. MAYBE LATER...

WHAT... WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO *DO?*

THE *POLICE* ARE COMING. THEY'RE *ASKING QUESTIONS!* WHEN THEY *GET* HERE, I'LL *TELL* YOU WHAT TO *SAY!*

SHE'S JUST LIKE THE OTHERS. THE OTHERS YOU'VE MURDERED. THEY PLEADED TOO... BEGGED YOU... CRIED... BLABBERED FOR YOUR PITY. BUT YOU DIDN'T LISTEN TO THEM. EVEN WHEN THEY OFFERED YOU THINGS, YOU DIDN'T LISTEN. LIKE THE YOUNG WOMAN WHOSE APARTMENT YOU BROKE INTO. YOUR *FIRST* VICTIM...

I HAVE *JEWELRY!* I'LL *GIVE IT ALL* TO YOU! *TAKE* IT! *IT'S INSURED!* JUST LET ME *LIVE!*

I DON'T *WANT* JEWELRY! I DON'T *NEED* IT! I *HAVE TO KILL YOU!*

THEY SAY YOU ARE A 'HOMICIDAL MANIAC'. THEY SAY YOU ARE TWISTED MENTALLY...THAT YOU KILL FOR THE ENJOY MENT OF KILLING. PERHAPS THEY ARE RIGHT. NO AMOUNT OF PLEADING CAN STOP YOU. YOU WON'T LISTEN. YOU DIDN'T LISTEN TO THE YOUNG WOMAN. YOU SLIT HER THROAT WITH THE SHINY SWITCH-KNIFE BLADE AND WATCHED HER DIE. AND YOU LAUGHED...

EH, EH, EH, EH...

YOU DIDN'T LISTEN TO ANY OF THEM. YOU DIDN'T EVEN HEAR THEM. YOUR TWISTED BRAIN HAD ONLY ONE IDEA. KILL... *KILL!* IT *THRILLED* YOU. IT MADE YOU FEEL *STRONG*... AND *SATISFIED*... AND *ELATED!* AND THEN SAD... AND YOU HAD TO KILL AGAIN...

WHAT DO YOU *WANT?* WHY ARE YOU *FOLLOWING* ME? *HERE!* HERE'S MY *PURSE!* NOW, LEAVE ME *ALONE.*

I DON'T *WANT* YOUR *PURSE!*

THEY WERE ALL THE SAME, THESE WOMEN YOU FOUND. THEY ALL BEGGED YOU TO SPARE THEM. AND THEY ALL DIED ANYWAY.. THEIR PLEADING UNHEARD...

I'LL GIVE YOU *ANYTHING... ANYTHING!* I'LL... *NO..* *OH, GOD, NO...*

IT WASN'T THEIR MONEY YOU WANTED. IT WASN'T THEIR JEWELRY, THEIR VALUABLES. IT WASN'T ANY-THING THEY COULD OFFER YOU. IT WAS SOMETHING INSIDE YOU. SOME-THING THAT SMOULDERED AND GLOWED AND THEN FLARED UP IN A HUNGRY CONSUMING FLAME THAT COULD ONLY BE EXTINGUISHED BY KILLING...

G-G-G-N-N-N-G-H-H-H

HOW MANY HAVE THERE BEEN? HOW MANY MURDERS HAVE YOU COMMITTED? YOU CAN HARDLY REMEMBER NOW. SIX? SEVEN? DOES IT MATTER? WHAT MATTERS NOW IS THAT THEY'VE CAUGHT UP WITH YOU. SOMEONE HEARD YOUR LATEST VICTIM'S SCREAM.

IT'S THAT *MANIAC!* I *KNOW* IT! OH, *HURRY...* *HURRY...*

THE SHRILL POLICE WHISTLES AND WHINING SIRENS HAD CONVERGED UPON YOU AS YOU HURRIED FROM THE TENEMENT WHERE YOUR LATEST VICTIM LAY... HER LIFE OOZING OUT OF THE KNIFE-WOUND IN HER CHEST...

THERE HE GOES! *AFTER* HIM!

AND THE FIGURES IN DARK BLUE UNIFORMS HAD CHASED YOU THROUGH BACK ALLEYS AND ACROSS FENCES UNTIL YOU'D LOST THEM. THEN YOU'D DARTED INTO THIS TENEMENT...

IF I CAN GET TO THE *ROOF*, I COULD *CROSS OVER*... DOWN THE *WHOLE BLOCK* TO MY *OWN*

BUT THE DOOR TO THE ROOF HAD BEEN PADLOCKED, AND THE POLICE HAD SURROUNDED THE AREA. AND NOW THEY ARE DOWNSTAIRS, ASKING QUESTIONS, SEARCHING EACH APARTMENT, AND YOU ARE STANDING OVER AN OLD WOMAN WHO STARES UP AT YOU THROUGH TERROR-FILLED EYES...

YOU LIVE HERE *ALONE?*

N-NO! I HAVE A *SON*. HE'S OUT TONIGHT... ON A... *DATE!*

NOW THERE ARE VOICES OUTSIDE AND FOOTSTEPS. YOU SLIP YOUR SWITCH-KNIFE FROM YOUR POCKET AND SNAP IT OPEN.

GASP

IF YOU DON'T DO EXACTLY WHAT I SAY, I'LL *CUT YOUR HEART OUT*..

SUDDENLY THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. THE OLD WOMAN JUST STARES IN HORROR AT THE GLEAMING BLADE IN YOUR HAND...

ANSWER IT! ASK WHO IT IS!

I..I DON'T...

THE KNOCK IS HEAVIER THIS TIME. YOU PRESS THE KNIFE-BLADE AGAINST HER THROAT...

ASK WHO IT IS OR...

WHO WHO'S THERE?

IT'S THE POLICE. OPEN UP!

TELL 'EM YOU'RE *NOT DRESSED.* TELL 'EM YOU *CAN'T COME* TO THE *DOOR!*

THE OLD WOMAN STARES AT YOU... HESITATES... THEN..

I... I'M *NOT DRESSED!* I *CAN'T* COME TO THE *DOOR!*

ASK 'EM WHAT THEY WANT...

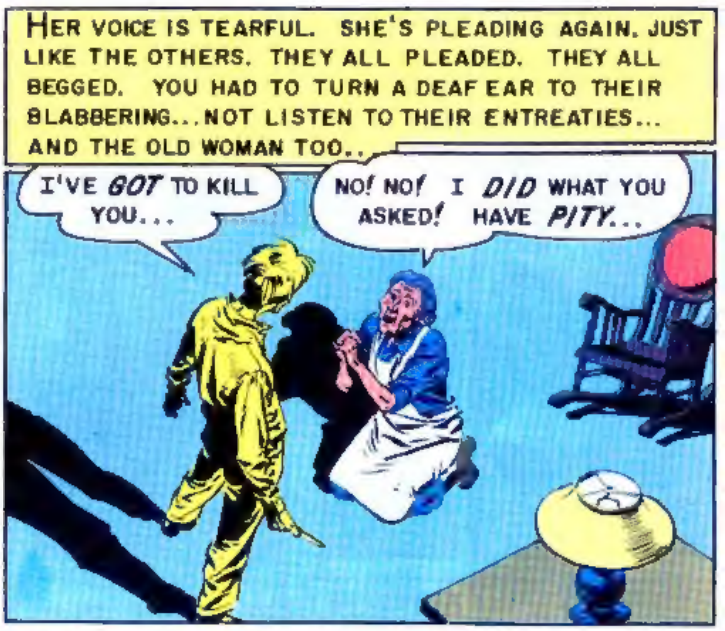
THE OLD WOMAN STAMMERS...
WHAT... WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WE'VE TRACKED A HOMICIDAL MANIAC INTO THIS BUILDING, MA'AM!
SHE LOOKS AT YOU QUESTIONINGLY.
TELL 'EM YOU DIDN'T HEAR OR SEE ANYONE...
I'M SORRY! I HAVEN'T HEARD OR SEEN ANYONE!
THERE IS A MOMENT OF SILENCE. DOWN THE HALL, A DOOR SLAMS AND FOOTSTEPS APPROACH...
SHE SAYS SHE HASN'T SEEN ANYBODY! ANY OTHER APARTMENTS, MR. TUCKER?
NO, OFFICER! THIS IS THE LAST ONE, AND THE DOOR TO THE ROOF IS PADLOCKED...
WHO'S MR. TUCKER?
HE... HE'S THE SUPERINTENDANT OF THE BUILDING!
WELL, LET'S GO. WE'LL TRY THE NEXT BUILDING.
JUST A MINUTE, OFFICER. DID YOU SPEAK TO THE OLD LADY IN THERE OR TO CHARLIE?
THE OLD LADY...
WHO'S CHARLIE?
MY SON!
ER... MRS. GREENE?
YOUR NAME GREENE?
Y-YES!
THE OLD LADY LOOKS AT YOU, WAITING FOR INSTRUCTIONS.
MRS. GREENE? YOU ALL RIGHT?
TELL MR. TUCKER YOU'RE FINE... THAT YOU'RE NOT DRESSED... AND THAT'S WHY YOU WON'T OPEN UP!
I'M FINE MR. TUCKER! I CAN'T COME TO THE DOOR BECAUSE I'M NOT DRESSED!
5

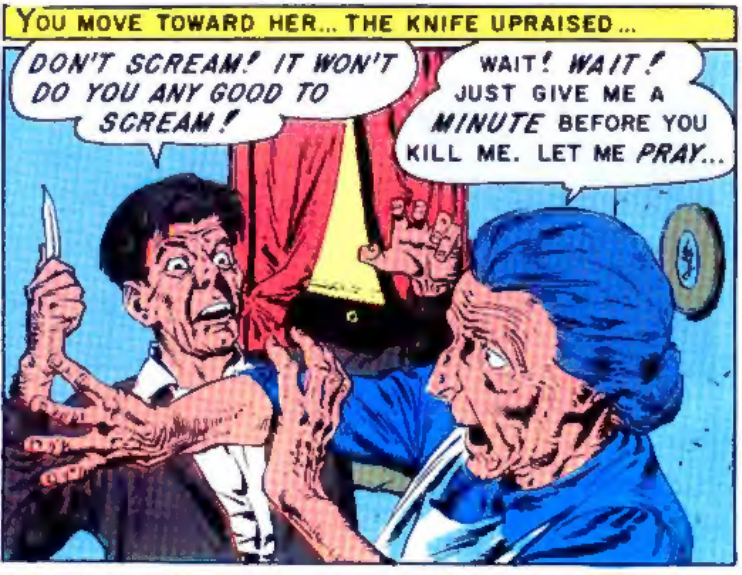
IT'S QUIET OUTSIDE THE DOOR. YOU WAIT FOR THE FOOTSTEPS TO SOUND ON THE STAIRS...TO TELL YOU THAT THEY'RE GOING AWAY. BUT MR. TUCKER'S VOICE DRIFTS THROUGH...
IS CHARLIE THERE, MRS. GREENE?

THE OLD LADY JUST STARES AT YOU BLANKLY...
WELL...ANSWER HIM!
WHAT SHOULD I TELL HIM?

TELL HIM CHARLIE'S OUT ON A DATE! DON'T ACT SO STUPID!
CHARLIE'S OUT TONIGHT, MR. TUCKER. HE HAD A DATE!

YOU CAN HEAR THEM WHISPERING OUT THERE, MR. TUCKER AND THE COPS. THEN YOU HEAR THEM GO AWAY...
WHEW! THEY'RE GONE!
I DID WHAT YOU TOLD ME! I SAID WHAT YOU WANTED ME TO SAY! YOU WON'T KILL ME NOW, WILL YOU?


HER VOICE IS TEARFUL. SHE'S PLEADING AGAIN, JUST LIKE THE OTHERS. THEY ALL PLEADED. THEY ALL BEGGED. YOU HAD TO TURN A DEAF EAR TO THEIR BLABBERING...NOT LISTEN TO THEIR ENTREATIES... AND THE OLD WOMAN TOO..
I'VE GOT TO KILL YOU...
NO! NO! I DID WHAT YOU ASKED! HAVE PITY...


YOU MOVE TOWARD HER... THE KNIFE UPRAISED...
DON'T SCREAM! IT WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD TO SCREAM!
WAIT! WAIT! JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE BEFORE YOU KILL ME. LET ME PRAY...

YOU STOP. SHE COWERS AGAINST THE WALL, SOBBING QUIETLY. YOU GRIN...
ALL RIGHT. PRAY...

SUDDENLY THE TENEMENT DOOR SPLINTERS OPEN. AT THE SAME TIME, THE WINDOW LEADING OUT TO THE FIRE-ESCAPE CRASHES INTO A THOUSAND PIECES...
COPS!
OH, THANK GOD! THANK GOD!
YOU DROP THE KNIFE. THERE'S NO PLACE TO RUN. YOU'RE CORNERED, LIKED A WILD ANIMAL. AND LIKE A WILD ANIMAL, THEY'RE GOING TO PUT YOU IN A CAGE...
ONE MOVE AND WE SHOOT...
DON'T... DON'T SHOOT...
THEY'RE SLIPPING SHINY SILVER BRACELETS ON YOUR WRISTS NOW. AND THE OLD WOMAN IS SOBBING...
OH, MR. TUCKER. I'M SO LUCKY YOU WERE OUT THERE!
IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW, MRS. GREENE!
AND JUST BEFORE THEY LEAD YOU AWAY, YOU HEAR IT ALL... THE WHOLE CRAZY THING...THE THING THAT TRAPPED YOU...
I KNEW HE WAS IN THERE, MRS. GREENE. I KNEW HE WAS TELLING YOU WHAT TO SAY!
HE HAD A KNIFE... HE...
MR. TUCKER LOOKS AT YOU. HE SMILES...
YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT MRS. GREENE, DID YOU? NOBODY DOES WHEN THEY FIRST MEET HER. SHE'S AN EXCELLENT LIP-READER. BUT SHE'S STONE-DEAF...
...AND YOU CAN'T READ LIPS THROUGH DOORS! LET'S GO...
SO NOW YOU'RE AN INMATE OF THE STATE HOSPITAL FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE. AND AS YOU SIT ON THE BARE FLOOR OF YOUR PADDED CELL, YOU GIGGLE. YOU GIGGLE ALL DAY LONG.
EH, EH, EH, EH, EH...
SO FUNNY! YOU TURNED DEAF EARS TO THE WOMEN YOU KILLED, AND AN OLD WOMAN'S DEAF EARS FINALLY TURNED YOU... OVER TO THE POLICE...

The Old Witch